

## Canadian Expeditionary Force Study Group

Dedicated to the Study of the Canadian  
Expeditionary Force The Great War of  
1914 – 1921

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## CA40: Report Submitted to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission

Posted on October 16, 2016 by cefmatrix

As requested, here is the text of the report submitted to the CWGC on March 1, 2016. I have done my best to recreate this in the same format as it was submitted.

### March 1, 2016: The Location of CA40 Burial Site, Thelus, France

For more than a year, a Research Team at the [Canadian Expeditionary Force Study Group](#) has been undertaking an examination of available records to identify the most probable location of the First World War burial site known as CA 40 (“C” for “Canadian”, “A” for “1st Division” and “40” the “numerical identifier”). This is our report on those findings.

The CWGC reference to the burial ground is contained in the documentation for the [Nine Elms Military Cemetery, Thelus](#):

*GRAVE CA 40, THELUS, 274 metres West of the main road, by the light railway track. Here were buried 44 Canadian soldiers of the 16th Battalion who fell on the 9th April 1917.*

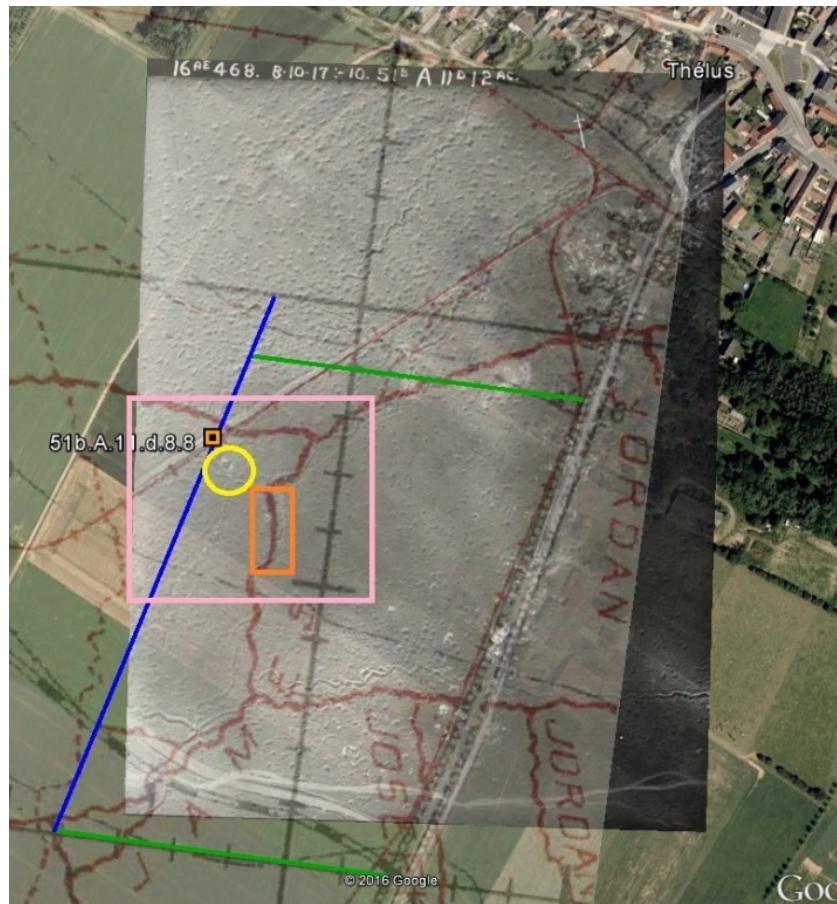
Our investigation agrees completely with this description, which we understand was initially provided by the British First Army to the Imperial War Graves Commission during the period in which graves were being concentrated in May of 1919.

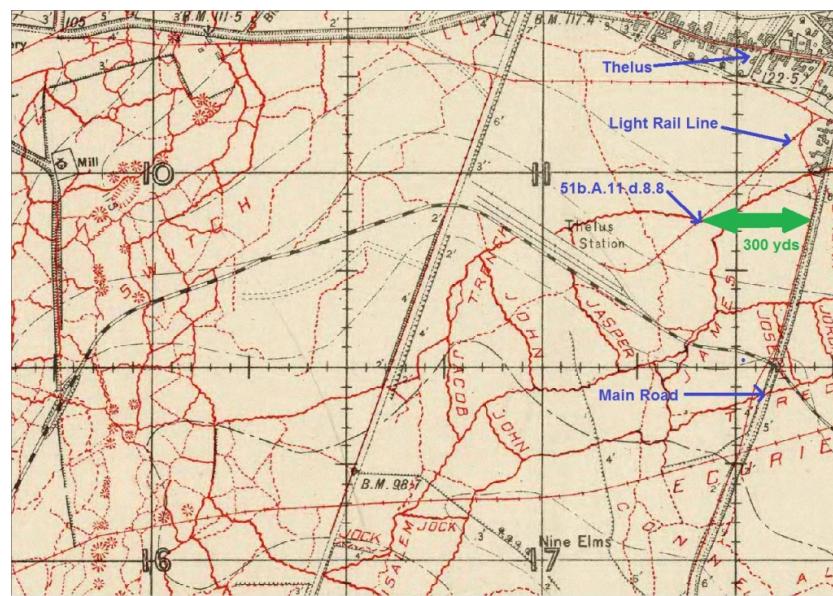
The tools we used to undertake our research into the true location of the CA 40 burial sited consisted of:

1. *Circumstances of Death* and *E-13 War Graves Registers* for Canadian soldiers buried in CA 40 and other temporary burial sites in the Thelus area.
2. *Graves Registration Report Forms* (GRRF) and *Concentration of Graves Exhumations and Re-Burials Burial Returns* (COG-BR) for the concentration cemeteries in the area where Canadian remains were buried.
3. *War Diaries* of the Canadian Expeditionary Force at Vimy in April 1917 at the Division, Brigade and Battalion level.
4. 1:40,000 scale area trench maps from the Lloyd Reeds Collection at McMaster University, Hamilton Canada.
5. 1:10,000 scale trench maps from the Imperial War Museum contained in the DVD set “The National Archives British Trench Map Atlas DVD 1”.
6. On-line aerial photographs from the area south of Thelus as available for Sector A of Trench Map 51b.
7. Photographs of burial sites in the Vimy sector in the Spring of 1917, from the collection at Library and Archives Canada.
8. Google Earth overlays of the area using a combination of 1917 trench maps and aerial photographs to identify the key features of the area.

9. Photographs of battalion burial sites in the Vimy sector in Spring of 1917, from the collection of the 15th Battalion Memorial Project.
10. Information on the location of subways, tunnels and craters in the Thelus sector in Spring of 1917, provided by the [DURAND GROUP](#).
11. On-site inspection of the area by the Project Director of the CEFSG Research Team undertaking this investigation.

On the basis of the work undertaken to date, we are able to clearly identify a site where the CWGC defines the location as 274 metres (300 yards) west of the main road by the light railway track. Using the Google Earth overlay process, the team was able to accurately identify the location at **51b.A.11.d.8.8** (GPS Coordinates 50.3513, 2.7958 or  $50^{\circ}21'4.68''\text{N}$   $2^{\circ}47'44.88''\text{E}$ ). The area is shown in the attached image as a partially filled in trench at the junction of the light rail line and the 274-metre mark from the road:





The CEFSG Project Director will return to the site in April 2016 and confirm the location of the site and discuss options to gain access to the site for examination of the surface geotechnical conditions. We anticipate the most appropriate next step is a surface level examination of the sub-surface geotechnical characteristics using non-intrusive instruments such as GPR (*Ground Penetrating Radar*) and/or EM Survey (*Electromagnetic*). Prior to deciding on the best approach, it is essential to discuss the local soil conditions in the area with geotechnical experts in France who are intimately familiar with the area. The historic displacement of the soil from the war and the local chalk strata may have a significant impact on the study conditions.

We can provide additional details on our investigation to date, and would be pleased to meet with CWGC representatives at the site during the Project Director's visit in April 2016.

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